

PEOPLE & THINGS

By ATTICUS

THE grinding wheels of progress are never still for long. Now it is the debutantes and their fond mammas who have been crushed beneath them. There never was any logic in the Court presentation of young ladies whose faces were like a sheet of manuscript paper on which nothing had been written, but it was a lively send-off to the season and lifted the West End from its winter sloth.

Undoubtedly it was an extra burden to the Sovereign, but there was something fresh and touching in this royal honour paid to these young girls. Nor should we forget those debutantes who came from overseas and lived happily ever afterwards in recapitulation of that moment of glory.

There was something charming, even if a little innocent and foolish, about the presentation of the debutantes, and those of us who are traditionalists must be allowed a sigh, if not a tear, at their Palace banishment.

The Clock-Watchers

A VISITOR from Mars, if he had attended last week's Canada Club Dinner at the Savoy, might well have been puzzled by the walk-out of a dozen prominent guests while His Excellency George Drew, was making the chief speech of the evening. When I identify among the fugitives Mr. Peter Thornycroft, and Sir David Eccles, the full character of the incident will be realised.

The handsome and amiable Colonel Drew had said nothing to affront them. On the contrary, he was proving, though it needs no proving, that Britain never had a better friend.

But unhappily there was a three-line whip for the politicians which demanded their attendance for a Division at 8 o'clock. When Colonel Drew rose to speak he said that, in view of the vote he would cut his remarks short, so that the M.P.s could do their duty.

As it happened the Colonel was in good oratorical form. Speaking of "Her Majesty's Loyal Kingdom of Canada," he paused and then asked rhetorically if he should have said: "Her Majesty's Loyal Queen-land of Canada?" This was greeted with sustained applause and laughter. No wonder His Excellency forgot the clock.

Not so the politicians! First one, and then another stole out, and finally there were parliamentarians all over the place scurrying to reach their cars.

Among the fleeing emigrés was Mr. Hugh Gaitskell, which shows how strict is political discipline even when a party is in Opposition.

Osborne on Broadway

THE last time I lunched with John Osborne, just before he left for New York, I offered



GODFREY MACDONALD

This Chinese wedding gown, worn by Miss Gillian Martlew, one of the Ballet Rambert's leading dancers, was the centre of attraction: when the company was welcomed home from its successful tour of China. These gowns, worn only once by wealthy Chinese brides, are of such value that the ballerinas find it difficult to get permission to take them out of the country.

him a thousand pounds for a third share in the Broadway production of his play, "Look Back in Anger." He was diffident about accepting it. His play might, he thought, take an existence for five or six weeks; but it probably wasn't "his sort of thing."

Now he knows otherwise, and I have reason to regret his refusal. Broadway pundits put the run at about eighteen months.

He told me this yesterday when we met again in the Charing Cross Road. He sat hunched in a fur-collared cardigan overcoat which suggested New York to me. So, it appeared, it had to an airport Customs officer, who kept him and his baggage for an hour and a half while they discussed the trophies it contained.

His own Musical

As do most visitors, Osborne found New York inspiring. In particular, it was its musicals which started up the creative itch, particularly "West Side Story," with its choreographic representation of low life in Brooklyn.

"I find music, speech, dancing and singing are the whole theatre," he said. "You see a single set and a few people come on and start to talk, and we've been through it all before. But this is something challenging."

Challenging enough, it seems, to start John Osborne off on his

own musical which he hopes to have finished within a couple of weeks—a "comedy of manners" about the upper class set, if you like."

Regius Professor

OLD hands among the Oxford dons told me they could not remember a University lecture that attracted a bigger audience than Hugh Trevor-Roper's inaugural as Regius Professor of Modern History on Tuesday. Every window-sill and odd corner was packed in the great room of the Examination Schools, that lavatorial building of awful omen, and even distinguished senior members of the University had to squat on the floor.

They were not disappointed of the scintillating academic fun we had come to hear. An elaborate analogy between the professional zealots of the nineteenth century and the Stuart monarchs, with the college dons playing the role of the landed gentry, set off a number of fizzling squibs.

One little joke will never emerge from the printed page. When the new Professor spoke of the Regius Chairs having been created to capture university education from the entrenched forces of the Jacobites, he pronounced the last word with a long A, and a giggle of glee went through the assembly before he corrected himself—a reaction fully shared, I observed, by the

Chichele Professor of History, Professor Ernest Jacob.

The 'Clergy'

Let me quote one typical Trevor-Roper witicism:

The exact scientists are a kind of pre-Reformation clergy, and their function is to perform their miracles, not to make themselves intelligible to laymen: for their control of the means of salvation and damnation makes the lay world so dependent on them that it will tolerate and subsidise them even without understanding.

It was a lecture that will long be talked of in the common room; but that is no new role for Hugh Trevor-Roper.

Best Seller

LAST week I had a close-up view of Sir John Wolfenden, who has achieved still wider recognition by his report on some sexual irregularities of the British people. From a remote corner of the room I made these notes:

Thinning hair... Just a suggestion of a moustache... Excellent voice... Swift mind... A realist, not a reformer... The whimsicalities of sin.

In retrospect the last note seems the most important. Admittedly a comrade-dealing wit cannot spend its time bemoaning the fact that vice does exist. At the same time there is a danger that familiarity with a subject may blunt the susceptibilities.

Oddly enough, as taxpayers we have what might be described as a financial interest in this whole affair. The Wolfenden Report was printed, published and distributed by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which also prints the Hansard records of the Debate in Parliament. It is no secret that Hansard is produced at a loss to the taxpayer, but so was the sale of the Wolfenden Report that the Stationery Office is not at all certain that it will have any deficit at all this year.

A Question of Bulk

SEVERAL of my friends have said jokingly that THE SUNDAY TIMES in its present expansive days was getting like an American Sunday paper, and ought like them to be published in sections; and the Editor tells me that some readers have written to the same effect. I fear they must have little firsthand experience of that extraordinary phenomenon of the North American Press.

Last Sunday, so my researches discover, the "New York Times" ran to 430 pages in nine sections, an average of nearly forty-eight pages each, and the New York "Sun" and "News" burst its own records with 552 pages in fifteen sections. Besides these a thirty-page or forty-page "Sun" and "News" looks like—well, what it is: a newspaper, capable of being read and enjoyed by any one reader from the front to the back.

A Lesson in Relations

I AM glad to report that the British Committee for the Interchange of Teachers between the U.K. and the U.S.A. have been doing some good constructive work. Recently a hundred American exchange teachers were entertained at the English Speaking Union of the Commonwealth, by the chairman, Lord Bailieu, and his wife, and by Geoffrey Lloyd, Minister of Education.

These scholastic visitors come from all over America to spend a year in this country, during which they not only travel and study but, like we were received by the Queen Mother at a garden party. The whole scheme is excellent, for in spite of the plumpicks which are inevitable and easy where two nations have the same language, the future of Western civilisation depends upon a growing unity between the English-speaking Powers.

Muddled Exchange

Let me end this Anglo-American chatter with a true

story. Miss Lee Greene was transmitting a cable to her home in the U.S.A. At the telephone the operator asked:

"What is your name?"

"Lee Greene."

"That's an exchange."

"But I am an exchange."

"That's an exchange in S.E. London."

"I'm an exchange in N.W. London."

It took a little time to explain that Miss Lee Greene was an American exchange teacher who wanted to cable her family in Houston, Texas.

People and Words

A cold war demands cold nerves.

—GENERAL LAFAYETTE MONROE

If I were to go up to the first man I saw in the street and ask him "What do you feel about NATO?" he would probably imagine I was giving him a tip for the Derby.—LOUIS TREVOR.

If the Church could send up a Sputnik with a bishop inside it into outer space, it would draw the attention of millions towards the faith.—LORD ALLSTON GRAHAM.

Two Sputniks do not make a technical summer.

—MR. ARTHUR BEVAN.

Clocking in at work develops outar schizophrenia—one eye on work and the other on the clock.

—EARL PEAVES.